DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 438 993 RC 022 321

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TITLE	Implementation of Title I Schoolwide Programs in Four Rural Virginia Schools.
SPONS AGENCY	Appalachia Educational Lab., Charleston, WV.; Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1999-04-00
NOTE	22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 1999).
CONTRACT	RJ96006001
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; *Administrator Characteristics; Educational Change; Educational Environment; Elementary Education; *Elementary Schools; High Risk Students; *Institutional Characteristics; Parent Attitudes; Principals; *Rural Schools; *School Culture; School Districts; *School Effectiveness; School Surveys; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	District School Relationship; Improving Americas Schools Act 1994 Title I; Virginia

ABSTRACT

A study examined factors related to effectiveness of rural Title I schoolwide programs by comparing two more-effective and two less-effective rural elementary schools--one in each of four Virginia districts. Effectiveness was determined by student achievement levels on standardized tests in comparison to the scores expected based on social and demographic characteristics. Schools were selected based on data that controlled for socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and attendance. Data gained from document analyses, site observations, and interviews with teachers, principals, district Title I coordinators, and parents indicate that more-effective schools had the following attributes: 1) the principal's leadership and attention to the quality of instruction; 2) a pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus; 3) an orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning; 4) teacher behaviors that conveyed the expectation that all students would obtain at least minimum mastery; and 5) the use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation. Both of the more-effective schools were in districts that had a tradition of planning for continuous improvement and providing guidance and support for improvement efforts. Three tables depict characteristics of selected schools, class size, and factors examined in the four schools. (TD)

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Presented at

American Educational Research Association
Montreal, Canada

April 21, 1999

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RC-022321

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This publication is based on work sponsored wholly or in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract number RJ96006001. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department, or any other agency of the U.S. government.

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Implementation of Title I Schoolwide Programs in Four Rural Virginia Schools

Abstract

This comparative case study examined components related to effectiveness of rural Title I schoolwide programs by comparing two more and two less effective rural elementary schools—one in each of four Virginia districts. Effectiveness was measured using test data and controlling for social and demographic characteristics. Programmatic and organizational differences in the use of Title I schoolwide resources were identified, and district context was considered. Because Title I schoolwide programs are new to rural schools, this study concluded that the climate, culture, and leadership of the school and the district's role in planning for continuous improvement explain differences in performance.

Introduction

The terms "high poverty" and "low achieving" typically call forth images of students in urban areas. However, those terms also characterize many rural schools. Often, these rural schools have less capacity than urban schools—especially fewer district staff—with which to meet the Title I requirements for serving eligible students.

The concepts put forth in the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994 were rooted in the belief that *all children can achieve to high standards*. IASA gave such schools greater flexibility to use federal funds. Schools whose plans to go schoolwide were approved could use the various streams of federal funds, including Title I funds, in new and creative ways to meet the needs of *all* students in a school. This change had the potential for increasing rural schools' ability to serve all students.

An analysis of test data shows that some schools are significantly more effective than others at improving the performance of students from low-income families. More-effective schools are those that demonstrate levels of student achievement on standardized assessments that are higher than expected when social and demographic characteristics of the schools are controlled; less-effective schools demonstrate levels of student achievement on standardized assessments that are lower than expected when social and demographic characteristics of the schools are controlled. Several studies have examined the effects of the implementation of Title I schoolwide programs in large urban areas of the nation; however, it is also important to examine how rural schools have approached this change. Further, it is important to compare schools that are performing at a significantly higher level to those that are less effective.

The Virginia State Context

During the past decade, Virginia has implemented state policies that incorporate the major components of systemic education reform needed to guide local school improvement. These components include an accountability system, high content standards, student assessment, and accreditation standards.

Accountability System

In 1988, the Virginia State Board of Education established the Outcomes Accountability Project (OAP) and for nearly a decade has collected data on a broad range of indicators of student performance and progress to monitor the educational condition of the state's schools and assist in identifying areas that warrant further review. OAP indicators are measures of student attainment and accomplishment, and include the type of diploma received, test scores, drop-out rates, and attendance.

High Content Standards

The state board of education adopted rigorous grade-by-grade content standards in English, mathematics, science, and history/social science for Grades K-12 in 1995. These revised Standards of Learning (SOLs) superseded earlier versions that had been adopted originally in 1981 and revised in 1988-89. The evolution of these standards involved the governor; the state board, which has constitutional authority over education in Virginia; the superintendent of public instruction; and the public. The superintendent designated four school districts (divisions) to take the lead in a statewide process for crafting the new standards. These divisions collaborated with the Champion Schools Commission, created by then Governor Allen in 1994. When drafts were ready, the board provided opportunities for extensive public review and comment.

The Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools (Virginia Department of Education, 1995) are part of Virginia's education code. Within these statutory constraints, Virginia schools are free to design their own curricula to achieve the standards. The most recent guidance, however, stresses the need to institute programs that identify students at risk of failure and that prevent students from dropping out. Moreover, in alternate years, the local boards are required to "revise, extend, and adopt" a six-year improvement plan that is developed in collaboration with school staff and community members. Likewise, each school must prepare a biennial plan that is consistent with the board's six-year plan.

Student Assessment

For six years, from 1991-92 through 1996-97, Virginia administered the Iowa Test of Basic Skills to students in Grades 4, 8, and 11 to assess schools' performance. The new Standards of Learning assessment system, which was designed specifically to monitor student performance relative to the new standards, was adopted and pilot tested in the spring of 1997. The 1998 results of the assessments were the first to be made public. Student scores on grade-level tests at Grades 3, 5, and 8 are to be considered for promotion, and students must pass end-of-course tests to receive credit for a course that counts toward graduation. Finally, the state administers the Stanford 9, a norm-referenced test, to provide comparisons of student performance to other states.

Accreditation Standards

In September 1997, the state board of education approved new school accreditation standards that call for increased school accountability and graduation requirements. The new standards also allow local school boards to decide whether to offer family life education and employ elementary school counselors. New graduation standards require 1998-99 ninth graders

to accrue 22 credits, and 2000-01 ninth graders also must pass six end-of-course tests for a standard diploma. For an advanced diploma, 1998-99 ninth graders must accrue 24 credits, and 2000-01 ninth graders also must pass nine end-of-course tests.

Implementation of the new accreditation standards for schools will be complete in 2006-07. For a school to become accredited, 70 percent of its students must pass new statewide tests in the third, fifth, and eighth grades, and in high school. Schools not meeting the standard will be provisionally accredited through the 2002-03 school year. If a school still fails to meet the standard, it will be accredited with warning through 2006-07. If standards remain unmet in 2006-07, the school will lose accreditation.

With funds from Virginia's K-3 initiative, the teacher-pupil ratio for Grades K-3 is 1:18. It is slightly higher for Grades 4 and 5. Virginia does not appropriate funds to match federal Title I funds.

Methodology

This study examines and compares rural, Title I schoolwide schools that are more and less effective in producing improved student learning to identify the programmatic and organizational characteristics of schoolwide programs—specific components that might be related to their effectiveness. Data sources included surveys of the principal, teachers, and selected students and parents; observations of third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade English and mathematics lessons; and interviews of selected teachers, parents, the principal, and the Title I coordinator. However, this report relies on interviews, documents analyses, and observations at the site.

Sample

The researcher worked closely with Virginia Department of Education staff to identify schools that met the criteria for further investigation. Virginia Department of Education (VDE) staff provided data on the pass rate on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) during a six-year period, proportion of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, attendance rate, and ethnicity of students for every public school in the Commonwealth. VDE staff also provided a listing of schools that had adopted Title I schoolwide programs. Staff at the Laboratory for School Success—the lead regional educational laboratory for this six-lab Laboratory Network Program (LNP) study—then analyzed data and provided a report that identified more-effective and less-effective Virginia schools (Yancey, Breeding, & Freely, 1998).

From the listing of more-effective and less-effective Virginia schools, four elementary schools located in four different Virginia districts were selected for in-depth study based on two additional criteria: (1) rurality as defined by the Johnson codes (Burcyzk, 1998), and (2) implementation of Title I schoolwide programs (see Table A1). Rural elementary schools that qualified for in-depth examination had been in the implementation phase for one year or less.

Data Collection

The data for this report were collected at the school site. Using the interview protocols agreed upon by the LNP members, the researcher interviewed the third, fourth, and fifth-grade teachers, Title I teacher (if applicable), principal, and district Title I coordinator at each site. In addition, a group interview was conducted with a group of eight to ten parents at each site.

Findings

School A Elementary

School A Elementary is a small, rural school located in southwestern Virginia. Phase one of the study showed that School A serves 330 students pre-K through Grade 5. Class size ranged from a low of 17 in kindergarten and Grade 3 to a high of 26 in Grades 4 and 5 (see Table A2). Fifty-nine percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, and more than 30 percent of the students are African American. The attendance rate for 1991-92 through 1996-97 was 79 percent. From 1991 through 1997, School A's students achieved consistently better on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores than was predicted when controlling for attendance, race, and SES (see Table A1).

The school spent the 1996-97 school year planning its Title I schoolwide program. Data for this study were collected in the 1997-98 school year—the first year of School A's operation of a Title I schoolwide program. The district's Title I allocation is $670,173, or $651.91 per low-income pupil in eligible schools. The district office sets aside $7,058 for parent involvement, $53,390 for administration, and $369,430.63 to operate early childhood (pre-K) programs in each of the district's seven elementary schools. School A directly receives Title I funds totaling $35,378.01, or $199.92 per low-income pupil (see Table A3).

Interviews reveal that while School A had only operated as a schoolwide program for less than one year, the portion of the overall school program funded by Title I had been in place for some time. School A has been developing school improvement plans for about 10 years as part of a districtwide effort to implement the Effective Schools Process (Lezotte, 1995). Each year a school-based team including the principal, teacher representatives, and parent representatives review goals and accomplishments of the past year and then set new targets for the coming

school year. Developing a schoolwide Title 1 plan is an extension of the schools' and district's long-standing planning process. Components of the school improvement plan are funded with dollars from a variety of sources including Title I, Eisenhower, and Title VI as well as state and local funds.

All of School A's Title I efforts are directed at the primary level—a pre-kindergarten program for 4-year olds, a parent training program, and a reading remediation program for first- and second-grade students who are having difficulty learning to read. According to the principal, School A staff "think it is an investment that will give them the payoff later on." Sixteen students are involved in the pre-K program, which is staffed with a teacher and an aide. First and second graders receive reading instruction from the Title I teacher, who is a reading specialist. She views it not as a traditional pull-out program but as a way to create smaller groups for reading instruction. She coordinates her schedule with the five first- and second-grade teachers. Teachers at School A concluded that they wanted to use some of the remaining Title I funds to increase parent involvement. In 1997-98, they held some parent training sessions, and in 1998-99, they planned and conducted a Family Math Night. Funds primarily paid for teachers' time and some materials.

When teachers of the upper grades, whose students do not receive direct Title I services, were asked how Title I affected their students, one responded, "It's such a success that by the time those students come to third grade, they are right on grade level in reading—right where they need to be. . . .So it gets the work done early so that they're on target with what they need to do."

The principal explains School A's vision as "providing a needy group of students with every opportunity we can." "That," he said, "needs to be at times a very disciplined and structured academic setting and at the same time an environment that is very child-centered and rock stable for the families whose children need some harbor." The principal also believes that a school is "only as good as its weakest teacher, so it's paramount to get the strongest possible, most effective people in all classrooms. We can't have an average teacher."

Teachers reported that their vision or goal is *improvement*:

- "What we've always done since I've been here is try to improve the students' performances—not just so they can pass a test, but to improve the students' performances period—to really get them up to where they ought to be, giving them as much as we can."

- "It depends on our test scores. . . . Reading comprehension is the big one we stress; math problem solving was low and we're working on that. . . . I do extras. Not only do I teach it, but I like to keep it ongoing so they don't forget it."

- "Our vision is to do everything that we can to make these children successful learners. And we've realized, too, that there are many occasions where this is the highlight of their day."

- "Student success. To incorporate it, we do a lot of reinforcement, review after we've done it. A lot of times, it will be when you review and you give another test, it will be 'Oh, I had trouble with this before, but I understand it now.' And they feel very positive about themselves and what they are doing."

Teachers also report using every available minute for instruction including before school, during lunch, and sometimes after school. They put problems on the board for students to begin solving as soon as the enter the room in the morning; they quiz students while they are on the playground.

School B Elementary School

School B Elementary is a small, rural school located in District B in western Virginia. Phase one of the study found that School B serves more than 150 students, kindergarten through Grade 7. Class size ranged from a low of 14 in Grades 3 and 4 to a high of 26 in Grade 2 (see Table A2). Fifty-six percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. The school has no minority students. The attendance rate for 1991-92 through 1996-97 was 80 percent. From 1991 through 1997, School B's students achieved consistently better on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores than was predicted when controlling for attendance, race, and SES (see Table A1).

The school spent the 1996-97 school year planning its Title I schoolwide program. Data were collected in the 1997-98 school year—the first year of School B's operation of a Title I schoolwide program. The district's Title I allocation is $1,080,867, or $701 per low-income pupil in eligible schools. The district office sets aside $10,809 for parent involvement and $118,770 for administration. School B then receives Title I funds totaling $47,380, or $532.36 per low-income pupil (see Table A3).

According to interview data, School B staff developed its Title I schoolwide plan during 1996-97 and began implementation in 1997-98. Planning, however, has been a regular practice at School B Elementary for more than 10 years. Every school in the district is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). That accreditation process requires an annual School Renewal Plan and a site visit from SACS officials every 5 years.

The change to schoolwide status, however, gave School B the flexibility to dramatically change its approach to Title I. The major intervention funded with Title I monies is the technology teacher and her part-time aide. The school used Virginia technology funds to purchase the hardware and much software for a technology laboratory. The A+dvanced Learning System (A+LS) program is the major lab component. A+LS provides over 25,000 exercises in 1,900 lessons that total over 1,000 hours of computer-based instruction using an in-depth curriculum that is correlated to national and state standards. A classroom management system allows for individualized lesson plans and full assessment and alignment; reports of student progress can be generated by teachers and administrators. In addition, other developmentally appropriate software programs are provided though grants from the District B Business-School Partnership and other school funds. The school received over $4,414 in 1997-98 from area businesses through the Partnerships in Education Program grants.

Every student in the school spends at least 40 minutes per day in the lab. There they learn and practice the technology skills required by the Virginia Standards of Learning. In addition, they spend 20 to 30 minutes on review and practice for one or more core subject areas. The technology teacher plans the technology skills lessons. She also works closely with the classroom teachers to identify standards-based lessons in the A+LS program that are appropriate to each student's needs. The technology/Title I teacher and the classroom teacher guide the students' work on the computers.

When asked about the vision for School B Elementary, the principal replied, "The main focus would be preparing students to meet the challenges in a large world that is going to be dominated by technology. . . . I think we have made major steps at School B Elementary during the past 10 years by providing computers for children." He also observed, "I'm lucky to have hard-working teachers. They plan well. They execute well. Just by virtue of the area we're in they just have to work harder than most people. To me, it's just outstanding."

Teachers report the following about their goals:

- Our goal is to teach all students. We really do try to teach them on their level and try to provide extra things for the overachievers and remediation for the ones who need it. Every student can learn. I think the teachers here are very positive, very positive.

- We just hope we can move these kids out of here into the 12th grade and graduated with a high school diploma because a lot of the kids and their parents don't have a whole lot. We're just hoping our children, if they should move from the area, will be able to hold their own.

- Our vision is to provide students with the best educational environment that we can; to be here for students, to help them, to make them our

> number one priority, which they are because that's why we're here. But we want to make sure they are learning the basic skills and I think we do. With the SOLs in Virginia, they had to become more focused on that because we know they have to perform well. We want to instill in them that regardless of their background, they are all the same in our eyes as far as their potential.

And parents agreed. When asked what the school's mission is, one parent responded, "To educate our children, and they're doing a good job." Another said, "[The principal] has the highest expectations for our kids. . . . He expects 100 percent; he wants every child down here to do well."

School C Elementary School

School C Elementary is a small, rural school located in central Virginia. School C serves approximately 300 students in Kindergarten through Grade 5. Class size ranged from a low of 19 in kindergarten and grade 1 to a high of 24 in Grade 5 (see Table A2). Seventy-five percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, and more than 60 percent of the students are African American. The attendance rate for 1991-92 through 1996-97 was 82 percent. From 1991 through 1997, School C's students did not perform as well as predicted on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores (see Table A1).

The school engaged in planning its Title I schoolwide program during the 1995-96 school year and began implementation of the program in 1996-97. Data were collected during the second year of operation of the schoolwide project. The district's Title I allocation is $383,088, or $638.48 per low-income pupil in eligible schools. The district office sets aside $51,240 for administration. The remainder ($331,848) is allocated to the three schools in the district that serve Grades K-3. School C receives Title I funds totaling $137,911, or $638.48 per low-income pupil (see Table A3).

According to the school's Web site, large blocks of time are set aside for mathematics and language arts at each grade level. The blocks of time facilitate flexible instructional patterns to best meet the needs of students. Resource personnel in art, music, media, and physical education work with each grade level to stimulate creative, academic, and physical achievement. The addition of a new computer lab enhances student abilities in the area of technology and complements the use of computers within the classrooms.

According to interview data, much of the work on the schoolwide plan was done by the Title I coordinator. One goal in the plan is to increase parent involvement. To meet that goal, Title I monies support a home-school facilitator position in the district office. In addition, the school employs a home-school coordinator whose job is to help train parents to help their

children with schoolwork at home. She conducts home visits and provides recommendations for student improvement. In addition, the pre-K teacher for the at-risk 4-year-old program—Project F.O.U.R.—and the Title I teacher are funded through Title I. The Title I teacher works with small groups of kindergarten through third grade students who are identified as at-risk. Title II and VI funds as well as state and local funds are used to complement the Title I efforts. For example, an after-school homework program helps third, fourth, and fifth graders complete their homework each day from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

One teacher reported that student reading levels in her homeroom range from the seventh-grade to pre-primer level. This wide range in student ability suggested that when students are not grouped by achievement level, teachers taught to the highest ability level. As a compromise to tracking students into homogenous groups for the school year, teachers agreed to group students into homogenous groups by subject. One teacher at each grade level teaches the higher-level students in English but the lower-level students in math. The other grade-level teacher teaches the lower level in English and the higher level in math. Under the guidance of the new principal, teachers administer reading assessments and study the results of those as well as the Stanford 9 results to determine each student's placement. Students move from room to room to accommodate this arrangement. Thus, much instructional time is lost in the process. Although some teachers would prefer to keep the same students all day, they report that they believe this arrangement is best for students.

Through the third grade, students are also pulled out for sessions with the Title I teacher. Groups of students report to the computer lab at the assigned hour three days per week. They also leave their classrooms for art, music, and physical education. Teachers who share students reported that they did not have time to plan their work together.

The principal of School C is new to the role of principal and to School C. He was observed spending much of his time behind closed doors with parents who had come to discuss the discipline of their child. Groups of students are frequently in the hallways changing classes. Teachers often yell at students in the hallways as well as in the classroom.

Teachers responded that their focus or goals include these:

- "Right now the only thing they [the state] care about is the SOL test scores."
- "Everything we try to do, we try to master these SOLs. We are really emphasizing that to get them [students] ready for the next grade. We have to write the SOLs in our daily lesson plans. We just work on them."
- "The goal for Title I is to have all children reading on grade level by Grade 3. I know that's a vision; I know it hasn't been reached in this division. We have a tough row to hoe here. The home-school coordinator is in charge of contacting parents. If I have

any problems with any of my students, as far as work or attendance, I contact the coordinator and she makes visits or gets on the phone. I think that's had some payoff. Again, we've got a group of students coming from parents who don't place a lot of importance on education."

- "[The focus] is to teach the kids in a secure, loving environment where they don't have to be scared to come to school, where they can talk to anybody if they have a problem, to teach them at the level they need to be taught at, the way they need to be taught."

- "We've come up with benchmarks and the children have to master these benchmarks before going to the next grade. Our parents are more concerned about grades than they are about actual skills that the children have mastered."

- "[The goal is] to educate children. I've always felt all children could learn. I tell my students that their brains are like little bright sponges shining, and I'm going to give them all the liquids I can find. All children have the same want to learn. When you see those light bulbs go off, it's very inspiring."

When asked about the school's focus or mission, most parents indicate that they are unaware of a mission. However, one parent replied, "I hope it's to educate our children." These parents generally are happy with their children's teachers, although they express concern about the communication between school and home. When parents confront the principal about an issue, he often has to check with the district office before responding. One parent mentioned the large number of children who had lice, but others in the group were unaware of this problem. Another mentioned the school improvement team, but no one else had heard about it or knew who served on it or any decisions the team made. Finally, the parent group expresses distrust of the central office. They are uncomfortable with the frequent reorganization of schools by the district office; some schools have changed from K-5 to K-3 and others to Grades 4 and 5 without much input from parents. Parents feel the district office ignores their part of the county. For example, when the district started a program in which high school students tutored elementary students, the superintendent said they couldn't tutor School C students because the school was too far away. The parents feel excluded.

School D Elementary

School D Elementary is a small, rural school located at the far western border of Virginia. School D serves more than 160 students pre-K through Grade 7. Class size ranged from a low of 13 in Grade 7 to a high of 28 in kindergarten. The kindergarten, however, has a teacher and a teacher assistant (see Table A2). Ninety-three percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. The attendance rate for 1991-92 through 1996-97 was 62 percent. From 1991

through 1997, School D's students did not achieve as well as predicted on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills when controlling for SES (see Table A1).

The school was involved in planning a Title I schoolwide program during the 1996-97 school year. Data were collected during 1998-99—School D's second year of operation of a schoolwide project. The district's Title I allocation is $1,148,139, or $616.29 per low-income pupil in eligible schools. The district office sets aside $13,000 for parent involvement, $65,000 for administration, and $4,000 for other activities. School D then receives Title I funds totaling $94,292.37, or $616.29 per low-income pupil (see Table A3).

According to interview data, the school has been accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools for several years. Planning for the Title I schoolwide program was conducted by the school faculty under the guidance of central office. Two Title I teachers had been on staff for some time, but regular classroom teachers were not happy with the existing pullout program. One reason was that Title I teachers did not give grades. The group agreed to keep the Title I teachers but to use them in a replacement program instead of a pullout program in Grades 3 through 7. They believe this plan will give them the flexibility to decrease class size in math and language arts and increase the accountability of the Title I teachers.

The replacement program for Grades 3 through 7 is major intervention funded with Title I monies. Instructional group size is reduced by redirecting the work of the two Title I teachers—one math and one reading teacher—to sharing the load with the regular classroom teachers. For example, one half of the 20 third-grade students are randomly assigned to the Title I teacher for reading/language arts instruction; the other half receive reading/language arts instruction from the classroom teacher. One half of the third-grade students are similarly assigned to the Title I math teacher for math instruction. Thus, they replace the teacher for that subject. In addition, there is a traditional pullout program in which the Title I teachers provide remediation to students in Grades 1 and 2.

The district office coordinates Head Start, Even Start, social services, and public housing services with Title I at School D to avoid duplicating efforts across programs. Using the provision that permits concentrating funds in high-poverty areas, the district allocates Title VI dollars to School D and one other school. School D also receives a state Homework Assistance grant ($17,000) and a Truancy grant ($14,000).

Reading materials are scare in the homes of most School D students. Because the area does not have newspaper delivery, the school buys 100 newspapers that families can pick up. This also brings parents into the school. The school also buys 120 magazines, which parents can check out.

When asked about the school's vision, the principal responded, "We'll try to work with our SOLs, that's partly our guide now since the state defined our vision for us. So the test results on the SOLs probably do it."

When asked about their vision or goals, teachers responded:

- "Our school—of course we live in a community where there's not many jobs and so forth; therefore, most of the parents are on welfare so the kids aren't really exposed to a lot of activities other than what we give them here at school. That hurts them a lot academically. So I think the program has helped us; we can, by getting a smaller class size, help them achieve. Once they see they can, then they start thriving."

- "Students—make a better citizen for tomorrow. Let them know they are important. They're number one."

- "To take the child where he is and take him as far as we can."

- "To have every student score a passing score on the state SOLs. Everything I teach is related to SOLs."

Finally, when parents were asked about the school's vision, they responded:

- "I just think their goal is to let them learn a lot more."

- "The goal is not only do they want the best education for the children, but they respect the children in a way that I haven't seen in other schools."

- "[The principal] is a really good man; he will talk to the kids for a while."

- "I think the teachers try to take them as far as they can go."

- "If I don't know how to do something when I'm working with my child, I can go to the teacher and they will sit down and explain [it] to me and then explain how I should work with them with it. They will work with you."

Conclusions

The researcher examined several factors at four small, rural elementary schools that might explain student achievement at those schools. Because schools were selected based on data analyses that controlled for SES, ethnicity, and attendance, those factors cannot be used to explain differences in student achievement. Further, the test data used to identify the more-effective and less-effective schools preceded the implementation of the schoolwide programs, thus, the model selected by the school cannot explain the differences in student achievement.

A close inspection of class size indicates that this factor cannot sufficiently explain the differences in achievement (see Table A2). Most kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade classes are small because of Virginia's Early Childhood Initiative that funds smaller class size in those grades.

There does not appear to be a correlation between funding and performance either. Table A3 shows the amount of Title I funds allocated to the district and school.

Attributes of the school and district other than the Title I schoolwide program must be considered as a source for understanding the schools' status as a more- or less-effective site. It appears that the schools that were identified as more effective possess the attributes Lezotte (1995) calls the correlates of effective schools (p. 332).

One factor is the principal's leadership and attention to the quality of instruction. This researcher found that the more-effective schools have principals who provide strong leadership. They expect a lot of their teachers. They say they are careful to hire the best teachers. The principals in both less-effective schools are new and have not yet asserted their leadership.

The second factor is a pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus. In the more-effective schools, teachers clearly understand their students' disadvantaged backgrounds. However, they feel it is their job to help them overcome those disadvantages. They are clearly focused on the task of teaching; they talk about how important it is to use every minute of the day to make sure students have every opportunity to learn. They understand what is expected on the test and go about teaching students the content as well as the skills needed to take the test. They are confident in their ability to teach and in their students' ability to learn.

The third factor is an orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning. Although the interviews did not ask specific questions about the climate, site visits provided the researcher the opportunity to observe it. The two more-effective schools as well as one less-effective school appeared to have a safe, orderly climate. One less-effective school appeared to be an unpleasant setting for students and teachers. In the more-effective schools, school-parent relationships are good; the school involves parents in supporting their children's learning.

The fourth factor is teacher behaviors that convey the expectation that all students will obtain at least minimum mastery. Classroom observations and interviews revealed that teachers in the more-effective schools expect their students to master sufficient knowledge to pass the state assessments. In contrast, teachers in the less-effective schools were less confident in their abilities; they expressed an attitude of sympathy toward their students and their students' families. They didn't want to put too much pressure on the students because the "students already had so much to bear." They tended to look outside themselves for solutions to student learning (e.g., smaller classes, better materials).

Finally, the fifth factor is the use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation. The researcher found that teachers in the more-effective schools frequently monitored student progress, reteach as necessary, and review essential material regularly. Since they have high expectations for students; they don't want any of them to fall behind or forget the material. In contrast, instruction in the less-effective schools tended to be fragmented and sometimes chaotic.

The Importance of the District

Typical of rural settings, the district Title I Coordinators in all four districts that were examined hold at least one additional, significant job responsibility (i.e., Coordinator of Instruction or Coordinator of Special Education). However, both of the more-effective schools are embedded in districts that have a tradition of planning for improvement, and the district offices provide guidance and support for school improvement efforts. With high expectations established at the district level, schools appeared to stay focused on instructional activities that improve students' test scores. Although the district offices offer support for the less-effective schools, those districts do not consistently monitor performance and plan for improvement as do the more-effective districts.

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Appendix

Table A1
Characteristics of Schools Selected for Study

School	Attend-ance Rate	Per-cent Low-SES	African American Propor-tion	Pre-dicted Pass Rate	Ob-served Pass Rate	Average Residual	Years of Implement-ation
School A	79%	59%	30%	51.6	66.7	15	1
School B	80%	55%	0%	55.1	69	13.8	1
School C	82%	80%	62.3%	38.9	25.5	-13.4	2
School D	62%	83%	0%	48.2	25.3	-22.8	1

Table A2
Average Class Size

School	Pre-K	Kinder-garten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7
School A	17	22	22	22	17	26	26		
School B		20	21	26	14	14	16	24	20
School C		19	19	20	22	21	24		
School D		28	22	19	20	24	18	15	13

Table A3
Summary Table of Factors Examined in Four Rural Virginia Schools

Factor	School A District A	School B District B	School C District C	School D District D
Effectiveness	More Effective	More Effective	Less Effective	Less Effective
Attendance Rate	80%	79%	82%	62%
Percent Low SES	55%	59%	80%	83%
African American Population	0%	30%	62.3%	0%
Predicted Pass Rate	55.1%	51.6%	38.9%	48.2%
Observed Pass Rate	69%	66.7%	25.5%	25.3%
Average Residual	13.8%	15%	-13.4%	-22.8%
District Enrollment	6947	4494	2293	4081
School Enrollment	301	155	300	159
District Allocation of Title I Funds	$1,080,867.00	$670,173.00	$383,088.00	$1,148,139.00
District Title I Funds per eligible low-income pupil	$701.00	$651.91	$638.48	$616.29
School allocation of Title I Funds	$47,380.00	$369,430.63	$137,911.00	$94,292.37
School Title I Funds per eligible pupil	$532.36	$199.92[1]	$638.48	$616.29
Fed Funds/Pupil (District ave.)	$303	$472	$463	$982
Years of Implementation	1	1	2	1
Title I Federal Funding–Major Expenditures	Reading Specialist (modified pullout program) Pre-K program Parent training	Computer Lab-A+dvanced Learning Systems Software Technology teacher and part-time aide	Reading Specialist (Traditional pullout program)	Reading Specialist Math Specialist (Title I teachers used to decrease class sizes for reading and math)

[1]This does not include the funding for the pre-K program.